Traffickers and Pimps in the era of 'White Slavery'

Abstract

In the early twentieth century, the idea of pimping and trafficking was being codified in most Western countries, and was deployed to rearticulate prostitution as part of a criminally organized underworld that stood firmly apart from the normal world of work, migration, and licit relationships. Pimps and traffickers were caricatured, demonized, and racialized, and increasingly seen as the chief cause of prostitution, in contrast to older feminist critiques which articulated prostitution as part of a wider system of gender exploitation underpinned by the uncontrolled sexual appetites of all men. This article looks at two pimps and traffickers, Antonio Carvelli and Alexander Di Nicotera, who were arrested in London in 1910, as a way to challenge and complicate these understandings of pimps and traffickers in the era of 'white slavery'. It deploys the techniques of microhistory and 'intimate' history to uncover these elusive historical actors and to place them in a wider global and personal context. Examining the lives, work, and movements of Carvelli and de Nicotera, and others like them, reveals men who were indeed part of a mobile, cosmopolitan world of commercial sex, but it also shows the ways in which this supposed 'underworld' was deeply entangled with the licit economies of global capitalism. It allows us to see how these intermediaries in the sex industry were themselves often exploited and marginalized, even if their response to these experiences was to exploit others. Finally, it reveals that these men were in complex

interpersonal relationships with women who sold sex in these local and global markets. When viewed in this way, Carvelli and de Nicotera slip in and out of the categories we might assign to them, and offer new ways of thinking about third parties and about the globalizing commercial sex industry in this important period.

I

Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera came to London via Liverpool in April of 1910, travelling first class on the steamer SS Frisia from Buenos Aires, and accompanied by five young women.[1] The pair took flats in north Soho, and showed the women the route they were to walk to solicit sex. After installing these women on the West End streets, they travelled to Paris, where they found three more young women and returned with them to London, sending them out to Piccadilly as well. Dressed in nice suits and collars, with pistols tucked into their coats, they followed the women at a distance, and regularly took money from them. They frequented the cafes and pubs of Soho and dined late into the night at popular West End restaurants. The pair were finally arrested three months later, in July of 1910, after a month-long police observation, and were charged with 'procuring or attempting to procure' four women to become 'common prostitutes' (see figure 1).[2] It was a stereotypical case of what was known as 'white slavery'. The two men had evaded charges for theft in their native Italy, had become involved in the sex industry after emigrating to Australia, and began running brothels in New Zealand around 1908. With the help of two

[1] Unless otherwise noted, information about Carvelli and de Nicotera's activities have been compiled from the various police reports found in London, The National Archives, MEPO 3/197.
[2] 'Aliens in the Dock', *Reynold's Newspaper*, 10 Jul. 1910

Australian women who worked for them as prostitutes, Annie Sawyer and Veronique White, they had recruited through false pretences three teenage girls from France, and one from New Zealand, to sell sex on the streets of London and Buenos Aires. At the Central Criminal Court in September 1910, Carvelli and de Nicotera were sentenced to six months without hard labour, followed by deportation as 'unwanted aliens'. The police solicitors in charge of the case were disgusted at the leniency of the sentence, claiming in their final report that they had never seen 'two more despicable ruffians.'[3]

Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera were operating as intermediaries in the sex industry at a very important moment in which the legal and cultural parameters of prostitution were being redefined, and their arrest took place during the height of the 'white slavery' scare in the early twentieth century West. During this period, the idea of pimping and trafficking was being codified, and deployed to rearticulate prostitution as part of a criminally organized underworld that stood firmly apart from the normal world of work, migration, and licit relationships. Pimps and traffickers were caricatured, demonized, and racialized, and increasingly seen as the chief cause of prostitution, in contrast to older feminist critiques which articulated prostitution as part of a wider system of gender exploitation underpinned by the uncontrolled sexual appetites of all men.[4]

This article uses Antonio Carvelli and Alexander Di Nicotera as a way to challenge and complicate these understandings of pimps and traffickers in the era of 'white slavery'. In keeping with new work in social and cultural history, it deploys the techniques of microhistory and 'intimate' history to uncover these elusive historical actors and to place them in a wider global and personal context. Examining the lives, work, and movements of Carvelli and de Nicotera, and others like them, reveals men who were indeed part of a mobile, cosmopolitan world of commercial sex, but it also shows the ways in which this

[3] J. Wotner and Sons, Police Solicitors, to Inspector Anderson, 13 September 1910, London, N.A., MEPO 3/197
[4] Judith R Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State* (Cambridge, 1980), 256.

supposed 'underworld' was deeply entangled with the licit economies of global capitalism, industrialism, and militarism. It allows us to see how these intermediaries in the sex industry were themselves often exploited and marginalized, even if their response to these experiences was to exploit others. Finally, it reveals the complex interpersonal relationships these men had with women who sold sex in these local and global markets. When viewed in this way, Carvelli and de Nicotera slip in and out of the categories we might assign to them, and offer new ways of thinking about third parties and the globalizing commercial sex industry in this important period.

II

The history of prostitution is now a robust field, particularly the history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century prostitution in the West, but traffickers and pimps themselves have so far received only a cursory glance.[5] Magaly Rodriguez Garcia, in her brief assessment of the third parties whose activities, strategies, and opinions graced the investigative files of the interwar Advisory Committee of the League of Nations on the Traffic in Women and Children, notes that while much work has been done to illuminate the historical experiences of women who sold sex, 'the voices of intermediaries of prostitution remain thus far silent.'[6] While Donna Guy weaves the activities of pimps and traffickers,

[5] For very brief mentions of third parties in the sex industry, see for instance Elizabeth Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating, and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (Raleigh, 2006), 93–94; 137–8; 200–202; Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth Century Shanghai* (Berkeley, 1997), 342; Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago and London, 1990), 5; Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 211–212. Alain Corbin gives a slightly longer assessment of what he calls 'the many faces of the pimp', particularly the role of tattooing in the relationships between prostitutes and pimps in late nineteenth century Paris, but he himself admits it is a 'rapid portrait'. Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850* (London, 1990), 155–161.

[6] Magaly Rodríguez García, 'The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women', *International Review of Social History*, 57/Supplement (2012), 97–128. Some forthcoming work promises to further this discussion, including Keely Stauter-Halsted's 'Ravishers or Tradesmen: Understanding East European Jewish

especially the infamous pimp associations of Buenos Aires, into her seminal account of prostitution in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Argentina, their activities and social history are not her chief focus in a book that is largely concerned with regulation, laws and enforcement.[7] Even in the social sciences, pimps and traffickers have been, in the words of sociologist Holly Davis (writing in 2012), 'exceptionally understudied'.[8] Only in very recent years have social scientists undertaken to study third parties in the sex industry in their own right in the present day, but work is scant and it remains very much an emerging field.[9] The lack of academic research on pimps and traffickers is particularly surprising considering how central the problem of pimping and trafficking is in present-day discourses about 'illegal' migration, in the literature produced by anti-prostitution campaigns, and in the rhetoric of politicians who wish to be tougher on international crime.[10]

Pimps and traffickers are difficult historical subjects. They represent changing legal and cultural categories, and are very elusive historical actors. In the early twentieth century, the era of white slavery, definitions were particularly unstable. The pimp began his life in early modern, eighteenth and nineteenth century literature as a pander, that is, a man who debased himself to procure women and other pleasures for the gratification of his social betters.[11] The words used to describe him were connected to effeminacy and

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Traffickers at Home and Abroad,' unpublished paper cited with author's permission and Victoria Harris's "Beasts in Human Clothing: Pimps, Moral Panics, and the German Underworld," in *Festschrift for Richard Evans* (London, forthcoming). Mir Yarfitz has also explored the social history of Jewish traffickers in Buenos Aires extensively in his unpublished thesis, 'Polacos, White Slaves, and Stille Chuppahs: Organized Prostitution and the Jews of Buenos Aires, 1890-1939' (University of Southern California Los Angeles, 2012).

[7] Donna J Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires: Prostitution, Family, and Nation in Argentina* (London, 1991), 120–129.

[8] Holly Davis, 'Defining "Pimp": Working Towards a Definition in Social Research', *Sociological Research Online*, 18, 1/11 (2012), sec. 4.6.

[9] See for instance, Nicola Mai, 'Between Minor and Errant Mobility: The Relation between Psychological Dynamics and Migration Patterns of Young Men Selling Sex in the EU', *Mobilities*, 4/3 (2009), 349–66; Sheldon X. Zhang, 'Woman Pullers: Pimping and Sex Trafficking in a Mexican Border City', *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 56 (2011), 509–28; Josef Benson, 'Myths About Pimps: Conflicting Images of Hypermasculine Pimps in U.S. American Hip-Hop and Bisexual Pimps in the Novels of Donald Goines and Iceberg Slim', *Journal of Bisexuality*, 12/3 (2012).

[10] See for instance, 'Human trafficking strategy', Home Office and Immigration Enforcement, 19 July 2011, gov.uk/publications (accessed on 13 Jan. 2016)

[11] *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1989).

homosexuality.[12] He was pathetic and simpering, and was part of a wider system that was made possible by the economic exploitation of the women who sold sex and, most of all, by the sexual demands of the men who bought it. As Adam McKeown has argued at length, traffickers too were initially conceived of as brokers for a wider labour market before the mid-nineteenth century. They were migration and employment agents who arranged for the transport of cheap, indentured workers in an era when all migrant labour was fundamentally unfree.[13] They, like the pimp, were widely despised, but were not considered the cause of the exploitative system of which they were a part.

By the late nineteenth century, campaigns against government-regulated prostitution, the international abolitionist and anti-indenture movements, and the women's and moral reform movements helped give rise to concerns about 'white slavery'—the forced and exploited prostitution of young women within or across national borders.[14] After a spate of newspaper exposés, most significantly William Stead's 'Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', the campaign to strengthen the law against traffickers and pimps (and prostitution more generally) gained steam.[15] In this era of 'white slavery', the idea of the pimp as a pander, and the trafficker a morally dubious opportunist, vied for prominence alongside a newer image of pimps and traffickers as predatory, organized, violent, and controlling sexual exploiters. Pimps and traffickers were 'scum', 'despicable', 'beasts in human clothing' and 'vampires'. They were 'fiends in the shape of a man, who live an ideal life of freedom and luxury by trapping young, innocent girls and then selling them like cattle into a life of

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[12] Anatoly Liberman, *An Analytic Dictionary of English Etymology* (St. Paul, 2007), 174–6.
[13] Adam McKeown, 'How the Box Became Black: Brokers and the Creation of the Free Migrant', *Pacific Affairs*, 85/1 (2012), 24–25.
[14] Which has been admirably covered by historians, including Guy, *Sex & Danger in Buenos Aires*; Brian Donovan, *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vie Activism 1887-1917* (Urbana and Chicago, 2006); Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: English Feminism and Sexual Morality, 1885-1914* (London, 1995); Jessica Pliley, *Policing Sexuality: The Mann Act and the Making of the FBI* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014); Edward J Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight against White Slavery 1870-1939* (Oxford, 1982); Jean-Michel Chaumont, *Le Mythe de La Traite Des Blanches: Enquete Sur La Fabrication D'un Fleau* (Paris, 2009).
[15] On the 'Maiden Tribute' and other newspapers exposes about exploited prostitution, see Judith R Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London, 1992), chap. 2; Pliley, *Policing Sexuality: The Mann Act and the Making of the FBI*; Donovan, *White Slave Crusades*.

shame'.[16] These intermediaries in the sex industry, the report of the Special Body of Experts to the League of Nations Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children concluded in 1927, were 'real parasites who live on the body as well as the soul of their host.'[17] They were, in this conception, the chief cause of women's prostitution. As Alain Corbin notes, the pimp in this era could 'play the scapegoat in that he represented the link between prostitution and crime.'[18]

The laws and policies that emerged out of the powerful anti-vice movement reflected the contradictions and complications of ideas about traffickers and pimps. Initially, pimping was largely ignored by legislators. While modern laws against prostitution (soliciting and brothel keeping) were on the statute books by the early nineteenth century, it was only in 1885 in Britain that the Criminal Law Amendment Act made 'procurement' for the purposes of prostitution a crime, within or across national borders. This constituted the first law against pimping or sex trafficking in the British world, but it defined the crime very narrowly, requiring in most instances that the trafficked woman not be 'a prostitute or of known immoral character'.

A later Amendment to the Vagrancy Act in 1898 made 'living on the earnings of a prostitute' a crime, which could result in a fine or up to six months' imprisonment. To prosecute under this law, which was tellingly called 'living on *immoral* earnings' by the London police, there was no need to prove abuse, exploitation, or violence. In fact, evidence of these things would not in any way support the charge. Instead, police had to prove that a man had taken a prostitute's money, and that he was living 'wholly or in part' upon it.[19]

Similar vagrancy offences existed around the British world, and it was the Australian equivalent with which Antonio Carvelli was first charged in 1908. When he was arrested in

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[16] Charles Byron Crysler, *White Slavery: Our Daughters* (London, 1911), 23.
[17] *Report of the Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Women and Children* (Geneva, 1927), 9.
[18] Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France after 1850*, 155.
[19] Julia Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960* (Basingstoke, 2011), 97.

London in 1910, Carvelli was charged under the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, but had he been caught just two years later, he would have also been liable to a charge under Britain's new 1912 Criminal Law Amendment Act, which made 'controlling or directing the movements of a prostitute' a crime, and which made flogging a potential sentence for the crime of pimping or trafficking. It was the only non-indictable crime for which a man could be sentenced by a magistrate, rather than a judge, to the 'cat', and the legislation was passed at a time when there was a major movement against corporal punishment in the justice system.[20] This is a clear indication of the degree to which 'white slavery' and pimping had gone from being barely considered, legally speaking, in the mid-nineteenth century, to being considered a particularly heinous category of crime a few decades later.[21]

The pimp and trafficker emerged as more clearly delineated characters, legally and culturally speaking, in the twentieth century West. The archival record, on the other hand, belies these attempts at certainty. Records of prosecutions for prostitution-related crime provide glimpses of the myriad of roles within the sex industry that sat on a fuzzy border between the licit and illicit economy: estate agents and landlords, club and restaurant owners, shipping and employment agencies, corrupt police officers, and lawyers. Men who were identified as traffickers moved around the world, evaded migration controls, and avoided identification. Many were extremely mobile: like Carvelli and de Nicotera, they took every advantage of the steamship routes that criss-crossed the globe in this era and, as Mir Yarfitz argues in his study of Jewish traffickers in Buenos Aires, often looked very much like other immigrants.[22]

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[20] Most scholarly work, however, has been on debates about capital punishment, and no historian so far has accounted for why pimping became the only offence in civilian courts that could result in a sentence of flogging. Barry S. Godfrey and Paul Lawrence, *Crime and Justice, 1750-1950* (Collumpton, Devon, 2005), 69–70; 74–76.

[21] The Western Australian statute under which he was charged, the 1892 Police Act, actually predated the English law by six years. Other Australian laws against 'living on the earnings of a prostitute' included the New South Wales Crimes Act of 1900.

[22] Yarfitz, 'Polacos, White Slaves, and Stille Chuppahs: Organized Prostitution and the Jews of Buenos Aires, 1890-1939', 53–110.

Moreover, many intermediaries in the sex industry escaped the notice of the law altogether because of their wealth and racial privilege, because the corruption of their local police forces enabled them to work unmolested, or because the activity they engaged in was not recognized as an offence under the law of the country or the time in which they worked. Indeed, Carvelli and De Nicotera were unlucky when the unregistered brothel they were running was raided in Buenos Aires in March of 1910. Buenos Aires police, as Mir Yarfitz has noted, had a reputation for not fulfilling 'their delicate mission with the requisite zeal.'[23]

Pimps could also be indistinguishable from other men in a domestic and community context. Men identified as pimps and traffickers were often in an intimate relationship with women working in the sex industry, or played an important role in the lives of their families or neighbours. Is the man in the archive file a pimp, an estate agent, a husband, or all three? Is the man identified as a trafficker, as Keely Stauter-Halsted has found in her recent study of trafficking in Eastern Europe, a Jewish migration agent, helping his fellow impoverished and persecuted Jews start a new life in South America? Or was he a white slaver?[24]

Overwhelmingly, these men appear in the archival record without much context. They are anonymised interviewees in international investigations[25]; their faces are featured in the occasional collection of mugshots,[26] their names are listed in trials after crackdowns on trafficking;[27] and, as has proved very useful here, their trials were briefly described in

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[23] Witness statement of 'Doris Williams', 13 Jul. 1910, London, TNA, MEPO 3/197. *Buenos Aires Herald* as cited by Yarfitz, 'Polacos, White Slaves, and Stille Chuppahs: Organized Prostitution and the Jews of Buenos Aires, 1890-1939', 143.

[24] Stauter-Halstead, 'Ravishers or Tradesmen', np.

[25] Papers related to the Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Women and children (known as the Kinsie Papers, after the chief undercover investigator), League of Nations Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, United Nations Archive, Geneva

[26] For instance, the album of Cuban traffickers and pimps found in the papers of the Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Women and children, League of Nations Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, United Nations Archive, Geneva, box S171 and the Album of Foreign Prostitutes and their Associates, once held in the Metropolitan Police Archive, now presumed to be destroyed after the closure of the archive. This album was used by Stefan Slater in his research on prostitution in London in the interwar period. Stefan Slater, 'Pimps, Police, and Filles de Joie: Foreign Prostitution in Interwar London', *The London Journal*, 32/1 (2007), 53–74.

[27] Yarfitz, 'Polacos, White Slaves, and Stille Chuppahs: Organized Prostitution and the Jews of Buenos Aires, 1890-1939', 145.

hundreds of police and magistrates' court reports in digitized newspapers.[28] But these sources are very brief and give little away as to the experiences, work, backgrounds, and relationships of men who worked in the sex industry. Even those men who the law did notice the archive has since forgotten: most pimping charges were non-indictable and were heard before a magistrate not a judge. The records of these trials have for the most part been destroyed, and after 1930 in the UK, were not even statistically reported. These collections of extant records provide a snapshot of a man in the brief moment in which he was identified by the law as a pimp, a procurer, a trafficker—largely disconnected from the wider social, economic, and emotional worlds that shaped him.

Occasionally, an archival file will contain more detailed information about the man in question, opening up possibilities for fleshing out a more complete picture of their lives and involvement in commercial sex. Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera are two such men. What makes them particularly unique is that they appear in not one but two large archival files in two countries where they worked—Britain and Australia.[29] These files themselves provide rich accounts of their activities spanning over three decades, but they also contain clues that have enabled me to delve even deeper into their lives before, during and after their encounters with the law. Thanks to the massive resources that digital family history websites have put at my disposal—including digitized censuses, birth, marriage and death certificates, newspapers, electoral roles, passenger manifests, crime reports, and immigration records--I have been able to reconstruct much that would have remained hidden about these

[28] I have compiled around 100 reports on the prosecution of pimps in Police Courts and Magistrates Courts around the UK between 1898 and 1930 (British Newspaper Archive, britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk, accessed between January 2016 and March 2016), and have cross referenced these with prosecutions for the indictable charge of procurement in the Central Criminal Court (The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913, OldBaileyOnline.org, accessed between January 2016 and March 2016).

[29] In England, The National Archives file MEPO 3/197; in Australia, the file 'Cellis and Berard: White Slave Suspects', 1911-1927, Canberra, National Archives of Australia, 1926/20254

men's lives. I can see where they travelled, with whom they associated, the crimes they committed, and the licit labour they performed over a long period in their lives.[30]

This methodology is in keeping with a new wave of historical scholarship that uses intimate and microhistory to explore transnational and global subjects, and to illuminate historical actors who have been concealed, marginalized, and sometimes even self-obscured. As historians like Seth Koven and Gaiutra Bahadur demonstrate, the methodologies of family history and microhistory can become a way to tell the story of previously invisible people, and write global history—the movement of people, ideas, labour, and capital—on an intimate scale. This scale is not only more manageable. It allows the historian to see things that would be imperceptible in a different register: the subtle love between friends, brief flashes of agency and choice in a life constrained by poverty and gender inequality, the surprising connections between the global and the personal.[31]

As Matt Houlbrook argues in his attempt to decode the life of Netley Lucas in the *Prince of Tricksters* (2016), this kind of history and these kinds of historical actors challenge us to surrender to the fact that there is much we can never know, and to admit that the attempt to make a life into a story inherently imposes a disingenuous narrative. But, as Houlbrook shows, these possibilities and chaotic connections can instruct through their disruption. Netley Lucas' very unknowableness becomes a way in which the historian can think through questions of authenticity and confidence in the early twentieth century, and in our own historical work.[32] Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera challenge the way in which the stereotypes pimps and traffickers have helped to construct prostitution and trafficking as a distinct criminal phenomenon. It is not that historical detective work has the power to reveal

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[30] These resources include *Ancestry.co.uk*; *FindMyPast.co.uk*; and the extensive and freely available digitized newspapers of New Zealand (*Papers Past*) and Australia (*Trove*).
[31] Seth Koven, *The Matchgirl and the Heiress* (Princeton, 2015); Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (Chicago, 2013).
[32] Matt Houlbrook, *The Prince of Tricksters: The Incredible True Story of Netley Lucas, Gentleman Crook* (Chicago, 2016).

that these two men were not what the law claimed they were: in many ways their stories conform to the most typical tales of 'white slavery'. But an intimate history of their lives also shows the importance of considering historical actors, even unsavoury ones like Carvelli and de Nicotera, in a fuller context. It helps us to question the categories we assign to them, and the way that these categories allow us to impose borders on what is in reality messy and interconnected phenomenon. It also invites us to think about the moments in which the official record and subsequently the archive captures such people, the old and new ways we have of finding them within it, and what these glimpses can tell us about their lives and the world in which they lived and moved.

The projects to resuscitate the voices of 'the people'—the marginal people, forgotten by history—have usually been either explicitly or implicitly quests to find small heroes. Microhistory, intimate history, and family history usually explain their attention to the lives of 'ordinary' people in this way. Even as Houlbrook admits that the alcoholic, mendacious, and abusive Lucas makes for a difficult historical subject, his admiration for, and even love, for 'the trickster prince' drives his investigation.[33] I cannot approach Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera in this way. When viewed in the light of the picaresque, these well-dressed, transnational criminals may seem charming, but these men defrauded and physically and sexually assaulted teenage girls. Carvelli abandoned one of his victims in a lock hospital, leaving her to suffer alone with gonorrhoea and scabies.[34] De Nicotera struck a young girl so hard she fell to the deck of the steam ship.[35] Why would we want to know more about them?

The antidote to the search for small heroes in history has frequently been the exposure of demons. In Charles Van Onselen's *The Fox and the Flies: The Secret Life of a Grotesque Master Criminal* (2007), he traces the life, movements, and crimes of Joseph Lis alias

[33] Houlbrook, *The Prince of Tricksters: The Incredible True Story of Netley Lucas, Gentleman Crook*, 25.
[34] Statement of Mary Alice Wood, lock hospital ward nurse, 30 Jun. 1910, London, TNA, MEPO 3/197
[35] This event happened to be witnessed by a New Zealand stipendiary magistrate who was on the Corinthic, Alexander McArthur, who offered his statement when he arrived later in London, 15 Aug. 1910, London, TNA, MEPO 3/197

'Silver', a Galician Jew who left Eastern Europe as a young man and, like Antonio Carvelli, bounced around globe in the early twentieth century, earning money through racketeering, pimping and trafficking. Throughout the book, Van Onselen relies on many of the tropes that were deployed by the anti-trafficking campaigners who were Antonio Carvelli and Joseph Silver's contemporaries, and which remain popular campaign strategies by anti-trafficking NGOs in the present day: the pathologization of the individual pimps and traffickers, and the exaggerated innocence and victimhood of the women whom they exploited. Silver, according to Van Onselen, was neurotic and psychopathic, took to pimping because of his hatred for his mother, and was probably Jack the Ripper. His victims, or 'whore-wives', as Van Onselen calls them, were utterly destroyed by their involvement with him. [36]

As contemporary work on the anti-trafficking and anti-prostitution industry shows us, there is a very complex and fraught feminist politics behind the demonization of pimps, which makes this particular intimate history an especially difficult one to navigate. Today, as Holly Davis notes, social science literature is dominated by 'condemnatory, emotive definitions… which unapologetically demonizes and vilifies pimps', and radical feminist scholarship pillories the pimp as nothing other than a misogynist who forces women into prostitution.[37] In this anti-prostitution feminist rhetoric, to attempt to explain the structural factors behind pimping and to investigate the men involved as actors in their own right is to inherently apologise for them, and to deflect from the misogyny that lies at the heart of the pimp-prostitute relationship.[38]

The microhistorical research that illuminates the lives of de Nicotera and Carvelli does inherently act as their apologist. This is because seeing anyone in their full human

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[36] Charles Van Onselen, *The Fox and the Flies: The Secret Life of a Grotesque Master Criminal* (London, 2007), 2–5.
[37] Davis, 'Defining "Pimp": Working Towards a Definition in Social Research', sec. 4.6. For an example of these demonizing and emotive descriptions, see Andrea Dworkin, 'Prostitution and Male Supremacy', *Michegan Journal of Gender and Law*, 1/1 (1993), 1–12.
[38] Ibid., 38–9.

context usually invites understanding, even if it does not excuse. As Thaddeus Blanchette put it in a recent paper reporting on his research on intermediaries in the sex industry in contemporary Brazil, examining the lives and experiences of pimps usually leads to the researcher having 'sympathy for the devil'.[39] Sympathy for Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nictora may be difficult to muster, but we cannot allow pimps and traffickers to become the way to explain exploitative prostitution, without first trying to explain them.

III

Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera were born in Northern Italy in 1879 and 1884, respectively. Carvelli's family was relatively well-to-do: his father was a 'maestro di musica' and his mother was listed as 'agiata', of independent means, on her marriage certificate.[40] Antonio stayed in his hometown of Turin until he was eighteen, training as a vocalist and learning to speak several languages, including Latin and Ancient Greek.[41] At the age of nineteen, he escaped a sentence for theft in Turin and joined the Italian Opera Company on their 1901 tour to Australia. He stayed in Sydney and Adelaide after the company left, and, after serving time in both cities again for theft, he was able to reinvent himself in Western Australia. He acted as a shipping agent in Kalgoorlie, worked for the French consul as a translator, and taught Latin and Greek at Perth's Christian Brothers'

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[39] Thaddeus Blanchette, 'Sympathy for the Devil: Pimps, Agents, and Third Parties involved in the sale of sex in Rio de Janeiro,' paper given at 'Troubling Prostitution: Exploring Intersections of Sex, Intimacy and Labour Conference', Vienna, 16-18 April, 2015

[40] Antonio Adolfo Carvelli, 13 Feb 1879; Nascita, citing Torino, Torino, Italy, entry 432, Tribunale di Torino [Torino Court, Torino]; FHL microfilm 2,334,846. Luigi Carvelli and Maria Courrier, Certificato di Matrimonio, 8 August 1878, Verona, Italy.

[41] "Italia, Torino, Torino, Stato Civile (Tribunale), 1866-1899," index, *FamilySearch* https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/VBRG-GYX (accessed 11 Feb. 2015),

college.[42] My search for Carvelli has admittedly revealed a surprising and somewhat exceptional character, who was described as having a 'persuasive charm of manner'.[43]

Alexander de Nicotera's boyhood seems to have been significantly less stable, and much closer to the story of so many of his young, male, Italian contemporaries: born in Piacenza to working-class parents, Alexander had left home by the time he was sixteen. He worked in Liverpool as a waiter, until a failed attempt to emigrate to America saw him turned away at Ellis Island and eventually in prison in London for theft.[44] He was later deported from Belgium for vagrancy, washing back up in Italy at the age of nineteen.[45]

The two men's divergent early biographies had one important common feature: military service. Carvelli enlisted voluntarily for national service in 1897, de Nicotera was hauled in by the draft toss, or *estrazione*, in 1902.[46] Carvelli and de Nicotera shared this experience with many other men who were identified as pimps and traffickers in the early twentieth century: fifteen percent of the men arrested in Britain between 1898 and 1930 for 'living on immoral earnings' were reported as being soldiers or sailors, and this only includes those cases about which such details were given.[47] This connection can be explained in several ways. For one, prostitution had been entangled with the military for as long as both existed. Soldiers and sailors had always been a very large portion of the clientele of women who sold sex, often with the explicit approval (if not direct orders) from their commanding

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[42] Carvelli's thefts are recorded in a copy of his Australian criminal record in MEPO 3/197. He left traces of his licit work in the ads and society pages of Perth and Kalgoorlie newspapers. See for instance The Daily News (Perth, WA : 1882 - 1950) Tuesday 8 Aug. 1905 p 1

[43] 'Cellis and Berard: White Slave Suspects', 1911-1927, Canberra, National Archives of Australia, 1926/20254

[44] Year: *1902*; Arrival: *New York, New York*; Microfilm Serial: *T715, 1897-1957*; Microfilm Roll: *Roll 0254*; Line:*17*; Page Number: *274. Year: 1902; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: T715, 1897-1957; Microfilm Roll: Roll 0254; Line: 4; Page Number: 278*

[45] *Belgium, Antwerp Police Immigration Index, 1840-1930* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014 (accessed on 23 Jan. 2016). 'Alexander de Nicotera criminal record', London, TNA, MEPO 3/197.

[46] Informazione Varie, Cara-Cav; Questore di Torino, 1898-1906, Turin, Archivio di Stato di Torino, box 175. With many thanks for Archivist Silvia Corino at Turin's Archivio di Stato for help with the translation and orthography.

[47] It is likely that the entertainment and service industry sector would have been much more strongly represented if *British Newspaper Archive* included more London-based publications. Various police court reports for 'living on immoral earnings' from *The British Newspaper Archive*, 1898-1930 (britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk, accessed between Jan. 2016 and Mar. 2016).

officers. In the mid-nineteenth century, military officials actively campaigned for tolerated and medically regulated brothels, and by the time Carvelli and de Nicotera were born, regulated prostitution systems were the status-quo in much of Europe, and certainly in Carvelli's native Italy.[48] When Carvelli and de Nicotera became pimps—that is, when they attempted to control independent women who sold sex—they were in many ways merely following in the footsteps of the Italian State.[49]

The military did not just normalize prostitution and encourage a regulated market for would-be pimps. It could also help to engender the emotional and social disruption that would push them toward the sex industry. In early twentieth century Woolwich, London, for instance, police noted a dramatic rise in pimping in the wake of the Boer War, when injured and unemployed men turned to 'living on immoral earnings' after their return from South Africa.[50] The French men who starred in Albert Londres' famous 1927 account of 'white slavery' in *The Road to Buenos Aires* also noted how the First World War had set them on the path to pimping. Many were wanted for desertion.[51] In her research on prostitution in London in the early 1950s, meanwhile, sociologist Rosalind Wilkinson found that fully 12% of the women's 'ponces' had been army deserters, in this instance from the Second World War.[52] Life in the army or navy frequently left men physically disabled and diseased, emotionally scarred, and—particularly if their actions or inactions earned them a dishonourable

[48] Mary Gibson, *Prostitution and the State in Italy, 1860-1915* (New Brunswick and London, 1986), 13–35.
[49] Gibson, *Prostitution and the State in Italy*, 20–29; 55–56; 70–71.
[50] Police Notebook, c. 1898, Charles Booth Survey Documents, London, LSE Archives, B358, 371 138-140; Summary Report of District Superintendents, 24 June 1909, London, TNA, MEPO 2/1287. For more references to ex-servicemen as pimps, see Report of B division, 28 August 1933 MEPO 3/769
[51] Albert Londres, *Le Chemin de Buenos-Aires* (Paris, 1927), 53.
[52] Rosalind Wilkinson, *Women of the Streets: A Sociological Study of the Common Prostitute*, ed. by C H Rolphe (London, 1955), 244. As Clare Makepeace discusses in her article on military brothels during the First World War, while soldiers' experiences of prostitution during war were very heterogeneous, prostitution was nonetheless seen by the military establishment as a physical or disciplinary necessity for its soldiers, and by the soldiers themselves as a way to mitigate the horrors of war and imminent death and to express their masculinity. Clare Makepeace, 'Male Heterosexuality and Prostitution during the Great War: British Soldiers' Encounters with Maisons Tolérées', *Cultural and Social History*, 9/1 (2012), 67–69.

discharge—without any money or pension. It is not particularly surprising that particularly unlucky or unsuccessful soldiers were often found amongst the ranks of pimps.

Another common feature in the young adult lives of Carvelli and de Nicotera was their involvement in petty crime, especially theft. De Nicotera's first charge for theft was in London in 1901, when he was sixteen years old, for which he served one month in prison. It is easy enough to imagine his motivation: after scrounging for the passage to New York while waiting tables in Liverpool, he was left with only two pounds in his pocket, and quite possibly none by the time he was sent back to England by American immigration officials.[53] Carvelli's first theft is more difficult to explain. He had joined a respected military regiment, and was quite possibly singing opera for money on the side. We will never know the precise nature of his crime—his criminal file was removed from the extant folio on *fuori*, or thieves, in the Archivio di Stato in Turin—but his sentence (two years imprisonment) suggests a burglary or the theft of something of significant value.[54]

It is difficult to say how many men who were charged with pimping and trafficking offences had previous experience with petty crime like theft. Most extant files on these men do not include their entire criminal records (the Carvelli and de Nicotera case being one important exception), and their short trial reports very rarely reference their criminal backgrounds. While charges for pimping were often accompanied with charges for assault, men were rarely tried for pimping and theft at the same time. Evidence, therefore, is largely anecdotal. Albert Londres certainly felt that a life of petty crime (and the subsequent time in prison) had led men into pimping, writing in *The Road to Buenos Aires* that 'They begin young--begin by not going to school. They prefer thieving.' Their thefts, according to Londres, would escalate until they were caught in a serious crime 'and they make

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[53] New York Immigration Index. Year: *1902*; Arrival: *New York, New York*; Microfilm Serial: *T715, 1897-1957*; Microfilm Roll: *Roll 0254*; Line:*17*; Page Number: *274. Year: 1902; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: T715, 1897-1957; Microfilm Roll: Roll 0254; Line: 4; Page Number: 278*

[54] Informazione Varie, Cara-Cav; Questore di Torino, 1898-1906, Turin, Archivio di Stato di Torino, box 175. Carvelli criminal record, London, TNA, MEPO 3/197.

acquaintance with the Sante prison', where they would meet older men who showed them how to get into 'the game'.[55]

But theft and prison was not the only, nor perhaps even the most prevalent, way in which men got involved in pimping and trafficking. Carvelli and de Nicotera, like most other men involved in the sex industry, had licit jobs as well. The investigators for the League of Nation's Special Body of Experts noted that, with the exception of commercial sex boomtowns such as Buenos Aires, that 'earnings are low…Pimps all have 'side grafts'', which could include fencing, racketeering, and gambling but also included working in licit occupations.[56] According to Ben Reitman, whose book *The Second Oldest Profession: A Study of the Prostitute's Business Manager* was based on interviews with pimps in 1920s Chicago, 'Men move in and out of pimping very casually…Pimping is largely a part-time profession. More than half of the high-grade pimps are working.[57] Even if his income from prostitution was high, Carvelli was no exception to this rule: he sang professionally, imported goods, taught languages and worked for the French consulate and apparently continued to do so after he became involved in pimping.[58] De Nicotera, meanwhile, worked in his early life as a waiter, and later claimed to be a car mechanic.[59] The more robust surviving archival files on pimps often involve prosecutions for brothel keeping, in which the men in question were also proprietors of cafes or small-time landlords.[60]

Most men worked in commercial sex in a similar way as did the prostitutes with whom they associated: seasonally, casually, or for a particular period in their lives. Like prostitutes, the majority got involved in pimping as young men. In the compiled police court

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[55] Londres, *Chemin de Buenos-Aires*, 45.
[56] H. Wilson Harris, *Human Merchandise: A Study in the International Traffic in Women* (London, 1928), 61–62.
[57] Ben L. Reitman, *The Second Oldest Profession* (London, 1936), 44.
[58] 'Cellis and Berard: White Slave Suspects', 1911-1927, Canberra, National Archives of Australia, 1926/20254
[59] New York Immigration Index. Year: *1902*; Arrival: *New York, New York*; Microfilm Serial: *T715, 1897-1957*; Microfilm Roll: *Roll 0254*; Line:*17*; Page Number: *274. Year: 1902; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: T715, 1897-1957; Microfilm Roll: Roll 0254; Line: 4; Page Number: 278.* 'Aliens in the dock,' *Reynolds News,* 10 Jul. 1910.
[60] See for instance the prosecution of Rou Sharu, 5 Dec. 1932, London, TNA, CRIM 1/626

reports taken from digitized UK newspapers, almost fifty percent of men arrested for pimping between 1898 and 1930 were between twenty one and thirty years old.[61] Of the fifty three men about whom occupational information was given, twenty eight percent were referred to as 'labourers', fifteen percent were listed as carters, porters, or costermongers, and six percent were recorded as carmen, valets, or mechanics. Other occupations listed included tailoring, boot making, mining, dock work, and manufacturing (although all of these formed a very low percentage overall). Two other sectors, the military and the entertainment industry, were also strongly represented, at 15 and 13 percent, respectively.[62]

The chief thing that most of these men had in common was that they worked in trades that were defined by casual labour, periods of unemployment, and low pay. Certainly the twenty eight percent who were referred to as 'labourers' fall into this category, but so too would carters and porters, costermongers, and dock workers. These men, like the women whose prostitution supplemented their earnings, were caught up in labour systems which relied on a work force that could grow and shrink according to the needs of capital. Most male intermediaries in prostitution were more like de Nicotera: working class, and engaged in low-paid, seasonal, or unreliable employment, and hailing (insofar as it is possible to tell) from lower working class families. The majority of men in the police court reports from Britain depended upon the prostitution of their wives, cohabiting partners, or female acquaintances casually, as a way to supplement their own wages, or as a way for them to stay out of work for prolonged periods. These incomes were helping the men—and occasionally their families—'make do' and afford small luxuries, including, in many cases, supporting drinking habits, but were not bankrolling middle class lifestyles.[63] These police court reports must be treated carefully however, because the very fact of being a casual labourer rendered

[61] 'Living on Immoral Earnings', Summary offences, *Judicial Statistics of England and Wales*, 1898-1930
[62] It is likely that the entertainment and service industry sector would have been much more strongly represented if the British Newspaper Archive included more London-based publications.
[63] Various police court reports for 'living on immoral earnings' from *British Newspaper Archive*, 1898-1930 (britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk, accessed between Jan. 2016 and Mar. 2016)

men more liable to arrest and successful prosecution (and an appearance in a police court). The police had to prove that a man was 'living wholly or in part' upon the earnings of a prostitute: this was far easier to do if the man in question was unemployed.

Carvelli appears here as an instructive exception rather than as an example of a typical man who was prosecuted for pimping. He came from a middle class family, was well-educated, and worked in higher paid jobs such as translation, shipping and receiving, and teaching. He did, however, share in common with these lower-class, less well-educated men an experience of working in a sector marked by uncertainty, itinerancy, and exploitative, unreliable contracts: the entertainment industry. Like so many men and women who tried to make a living in theatre, music, cabarets, and dancehalls, Carvelli moved around a global entertainment circuit that followed old and new imperial connections, and which took performers on routes around Europe, through South and Central America, around the United States and Canada, in major cosmopolitan centres in the Middle East, India, and East Asia, and, as was the case for Carvelli, the antipodes.[64] He first went to Australia as an opera singer, and later was found teaching the tango in Hobart, Tasmania. These circuits connected up with other industries as well: the high intensity resource extraction industries of mining, ranching, and forestry; the transportation industry and shipping industries; as well, of course, as the tourist routes that rose in popularity as steamships grew faster, more comfortable, and more affordable. They also connected up with the cafes, restaurants and bars that employed immigrant men and women like de Nicotera in huge numbers.[65]

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[64] On 'white slavery' and the global entertainment industry, see Christina Schettini, "South American Tours: Work Relations in the Entertainment Market in South America," International Review of Social History, 57, Special Issue 20 (2012), 132-137.

[65] For labour and the international service industry in the early twentieth century, see Patricia Van den Eeckhout, 'Cooks and Waiters on the Move: The World and International Exhibition in Ghent, 1913, as a Destination for Hospitality Workers.', *Food & History*, 11/2 (2013), 287–316; Peter Scholliers, 'Anonymous Cooks and Waiters: Labour Markets and the Professional Status of Restaurant, Cafe and Hotel Personnel in Brussels, 1840s - 1900s', *Food & History*, 2/1 (2004), 137–65; John K Walton and Jenny Smith, 'The Rhetoric of Community and Hte Business of Pleasure: The San Sebastian Waiters' Strike of 1920', *International Review of Social History*, 39/1 (1994), 1–31.

Sex and gambling followed hot on the heels of these more licitly circulating industries. Carvelli's movements around the world provide fascinating snapshots of these connections. His first charge for 'living on the earnings of a prostitute' was in the Western Australian goldfields, in a small supply town that catered to the licit and illicit desires of white Australian miners, Japanese migrants, indigenous men and women who passed through the town, and most of all the 'Gwalia Italians'.[66] These were Italian mineworkers brought in by the American industrialist Herbert Hoover to work Australia's second deepest gold mine, because he could pay them less and use them to secure production in the event of a unionized workers' strike. This contributed to the widespread racism that Italians encountered in Australia, where, as the Italian consul who was stationed in Western Australia shortly before Carvelli's arrival put it, 'according to public opinion we were classed somewhere between the chinese and the blacks'.[67] Carvelli first got involved in pimping therefore in a complex microcosm of labour exploitation, racism, migration, and vice that was replicated all over the world's industrialising frontiers.[68]

His next move was to Wellington, where he took advantage of the legal precedent that, as Bronwen Dalley has examined, briefly made one-woman brothels semi-legal in 1908, before the First World War and its massive global circulation of troops saw Wellington police, like police the world over, crack down on this legal loophole and attempt to better control the perceived venereal threat of prostitution.[69] From there, he moved to Buenos Aires, the infamous centre of the international sex trade created by a mobile, immigrant population and a 'golden age' in the country's agricultural, commerce, and service sectors that depended

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[66] Western Australian newspapers give a rich account of society in Leonora and Gwalia, including detailed descriptions of the brothels in Leonora and, in 1908, Carvelli's first pimping trial. See for instance Kalgoorlie Miner (WA : 1895 - 1950) Tuesday 27 October 1908 p 4, Kalgoorlie Miner (WA : 1895 - 1950) Friday 23 July 1909 p 4, Kalgoorlie Western Argus (WA : 1896 - 1916) Tuesday 10 November 1908 p 9

[67] Leopoldo Zunini, *Western Australia as It Is Today, 1906* (Nedlands, Western Australia, 1997), 31.

[68] For further discussion of the links between prostitution and mining see Julia Laite, 'Historical Perspectives on Industrial Development, Mining and Prostitution', *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), 739–61.

[69] Bronwyn Dalley, 'Lolly Shops "of the Red-Light Kind" and "Soldiers of the King"', *New Zealand History*, 30/1 (1996), 3–24.

on fluid, exploitable labour.[70] He and the women he trafficked arrived in 1910 on a steamship that boasted a new refrigerated hold, designed to transport fresh Argentinian beef and pork to European markets.[71] From the Casino in Buenos Aires, Carvelli and the women fled to London, that great commercial, manufacturing, and service centre, an imperial and world city with a massive market for bought sex.[72]

Pimps and traffickers like Carvelli were part of a much larger story of the circulation of global capital in the early twentieth century, and these black sheep of globalization were also engaged in a troubling kind of 'cosmopolitanism from below'.[73] Alain Corbin posits that pimps were feared as 'the last embodiment of the physical threat exerted by the labouring classes over the bourgeoisie', but I would argue that it was the ability of the pimp and trafficker to impersonate, not threaten, the bourgeoisie which made them such despised figures in this period. They were seen as young, working-class men who enjoyed a middle-class lifestyle—including leisure travel—while doing no work. Instead of working for below unionized wages in the red dust of the Outback, Carvelli and de Nicotera used their role in the vice market as a way to fund their taste in dress and leisure pursuits, travel first and second class, and escape the indenture and exploitation suffered by so many of their fellow Italian migrants. They, and some of the women who worked for them, turned the exploitation of others into profit in order to resist being subject to the exploitation that so many of their contemporary migrants suffered.[74]

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[70] Daniel K. Lewis, *The History of Argentina* (Westport, Connecticut and London, 2001), chap. 4.
[71] 'SS Corinthic 1902', from The Ship's List, theshipslist.com (accessed on 22 Aug. 2016)
[72] Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960*; Stefan Slater, 'Street Sex for Sale in Soho, 1918-1939: Experiences, Representations, and Attempts at Control', *Department of History, Royal Holloway* (University of London, 2007); Slater, 'Pimps, Police, and Filles de Joie', 53–74.
[73] Tarrius, 2000, as cited by Nicola Mai, 'Between Minor and Errant Mobility : The Relation Between Psychological Dynamics and Migration Patterns of Young Men Selling Sex in the EU', 4/3 (2009), 349–66.
[74] For a general account of Italian migrant labour, see Donna R. Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London, 2000). John S. Macdonald and Leatrice D. Macdonald, 'Italian Migration to Australia', *Journal of Social History*, 3/3 (1970), 249–75; Jacqueline Templeton, *From the Mountains to the Bush: Italian Migrants Write Home from Australia, 1860-1962*, ed. by John Lack and Gioconda Di Lorenzo (Crawley, Western Australia, 2003); Robert Pascoe and Patrick Bertola, 'Italian Miners and the Second-Generation "Britishers" at Kalgoorlie, Australia.', *Social History*, 10/1 (1985), 9–35.

Pimps and traffickers also posed significant challenges for the growing border-control regimes of early twentieth century states. For instance, the Maltese and Cypriot men who found themselves repeatedly arrested by the Metropolitan Police for pimping in 1920s London complicated the UK's immigration policy—they were technically British subjects, and could not be deported.[75] Such men, hailing from the maritime border of Europe and the Near East, also challenged the borders drawn around the concept of being racially white. Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera can be read in a similar way. They were Italian men who moved around the world as part of a massive and often maligned diaspora. While much of the anxiety about Italian men as organized criminals, pimps, and undesirable migrants was directed at the 'less white' Southern Italians, it is clear that Carvelli and de Nicotera, as Northerners, were not immune to the racial profiling that featured in the control of migration and the policing of crime.[76] De Nicotera was stopped at Ellis Island because he was targeted as a potential unwanted alien, while Carvelli was blocked from entering Australia in his later life with the 'dutch test', commonly used as part of the 'white Australia' policy in order to discriminate against immigrants who were technically European but who did not fit the racial profiles that the country saw as desirable.[77] In the court reports on Carvelli and De Nicotera in the London and foreign press, their sketched portraits, when compared to their actual pictures, can be seen to be heavily racialized—their noses exaggerated, their eyes darkened, and heavy brows emphasized (see figure 2). The pair were consistently described as 'aliens' and 'two Italian traffickers in women'.[78]

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[75] This problem arose with particular urgency during the Messina brothers scandal, but had been an issue for the Home Office since the Aliens Act of 1905. R.L Jackson to Home Office Secretary, 18 October 1950, London, TNA, HO 45/24638

[76] See for instance J. Dickie, *Darkest Italy. The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno*, 1860-1900 and S. Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character for the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge, 2010).

[77] New York Immigration Index. Year: *1902*; Arrival: *New York, New York*; Microfilm Serial: *T715, 1897-1957*; Microfilm Roll: *Roll 0254*; Line: *4*; Page Number: *278*; Department of External Affairs, Re: Arrest of Aldo Cellis, White Slave Trader, 25 February 1925, Canberra, NAA, 1926/20254

[78] 'Aliens in the Dock', *Reynolds Newspapers*, 10 Jul. 1910

For Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera, their status as immigrants, and as Italians, mixed with a complex, and at times contrasting, series of factors that help to explain why they became involved in the sex trade. De Nicotera was denied entry to the US, and was deported from Belgium because he 'could not give a good account of himself': this not only reflects his marginalized status as a working-class Italian migrant, but also suggests he was largely without means.[79] By the age of 25, he was in New Zealand, associating with bookies, fences, and other pimps, including Carvelli. Carvelli, for his part, was far better off, and he was able to use his musical talent, his taste in clothes, and his knowledge of languages as cultural capital to make good in Western Australian society. His work as a shipping and indent agent in Kalgoorlie put him in contact with men and women who were landing at this major port to head inland to the Goldfields, looking to 'mine the miners'.[80] Carvelli, with a taste for the finer things in life, likely saw a good financial opportunity.

For the pimps and traffickers of Albert Londres' *Road to Buenos Aires*, the money that could be earned in prostitution—and the lifestyle it could finance—was by far and above their prime motivation for having gotten involved. The mostly working-class men he interviewed who hailed from Paris and Marseilles relished their ability to afford middle-class tastes in clothes, food, and travel.[81] Pimps in Chicago were also quick to tell Ben Reitman about 'the sheer amount of money they get from the women. …Few men seemed to have any moral qualms in making money from the business. It was simply a business where they found a niche'. [82] This commercial argument also convinced the League of Nations' Special Body of Experts, who concluded in their report that no measures to combat trafficking would be effective so long as 'the incentive of money-making remains. Profit is at the bottom of the

[79] 'Alessandro de Nicotera', *Belgium, Antwerp Police Immigration Index, 1840-1930* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014. Ancestry.co.uk (accessed between Jan. 2016 and Mar. 2016)
[80] Raelene Frances, *Selling Sex: A Hidden History of Prostitution* (Sydney, 2007), 46–73.
[81] Londres, *Chemin de Buenos-Aires*, 2; 64; 164–166.
[82] Reitman, *The Second Oldest Profession*, 87–90.

business'.[83] It is possible to catch a glimpse of the profits Carvelli and de Nicotera's were making. In Wellington, one woman told police that the each man took up to twenty pounds per week from the women who worked for them, and, even subtracting the costs of securing and furnishing the brothels on College Street, this would have left the pair with an enormous amount of money per month.[84]

Business, then, was one reason that men got involved as intermediaries in the sex trade, but personal and intimate relationships could also be a significant factor. We will never know for certain why Carvelli and de Nicotera chose to work together, but their shared experience of the military, of migration, and of crime could certainly have been a factor. From the police files sent to the London Met from New Zealand, we can learn that both had sought, but had been rejected from, membership in respectable Wellington society: when rumours of Carvelli's charge for pimping in Australia reached the ears of the Garibaldi Club, the respected Italian Society in Wellington, both he and de Nicotera were asked never to return.[85] In *The Second Oldest Profession* Ben Reitman claimed that this eventual exposure was inevitable: 'No pimp can dress well enough or wear jewellery so expensive that the best elements in the community will admire him,' he explained. 'He is anathema, a social pariah…'.[86] It is unsurprising therefore that men like Carvelli and de Nicotera sought in each other, and the subculture of which they were a part, a sense of belonging.

But we must not take Ben Reitman at his word: many men in the sex industry could successfully slip between respectable and criminal cultures. Carvelli spent much of his life living under assumed names as part of respectable society. He sang opera for the mayor of

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[83] *Report of the Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Women and Children*, 27.
[84] Report of Detective W.E. Lewis, Wellington Police, to Detective Ernest Anderson, Metropolitan Police, 7 Jul. 1910, London, TNA, MEPO 3/197
[85] Report of Detective W.E. Lewis, Wellington Police, to Detective Ernest Anderson, Metropolitan Police, 7 Jul. 1910, London, TNA, MEPO 3/197
[86] Londres, *Chemin de Buenos-Aires*, 242–3; 247.

Subbiaco, a suburb of Perth, at the same time that he was getting involved in pimping.[87] His brother in law, a government official in Western Australia, came to his aid when he was denied entry to Australia in the 1920s, and Carvelli himself gave evidence of his licit investments in the Antipodes.[88] What became of de Nicotera remains a mystery: he likely changed his name to an unknown alias after his release from London prison, severing the trail of breadcrumbs I had been following. Perhaps he, unlike Carvelli, remained pariah; or perhaps he turned to full-time licit employment and became a family man.

Many third parties in the sex industry did have families, and still more were involved in romantic relationships with the women upon whose earnings they lived. It is difficult to know what to conclude from official police observations that pimps were 'appearing as [prostitute's] husbands'. [89] In an era when many working class couples did not marry, and engaged in casual or temporary partnerships, what was the difference between posing as a husband, and actually being one? In the police court reports, forty seven men were specifically identified as the husbands or cohabiting partners of the women. In sixty one cases not enough information is available, but in only eight cases were men specifically identified as pimping women who were not their wives or partners.[90]

Carvelli would have been among this majority. He was legally married to the woman who worked for him the longest, the Australian Veronique White, who also played a very active role in the recruitment and coercion of the younger women in the case.[91] Explaining Carvelli requires us to explain her as well; and ultimately in order to understand intermediaries in prostitution it is necessary to disrupt the dichotomy of male pimp/female

[87] The Daily News (Perth, WA : 1882 - 1950) Tuesday 8 Aug. 1905 p 1
[88] Report of A.R., 19 Nov. 1926, 'Cellis and Berard: White Slave Suspects', 1911-1927, Canberra, National Archives of Australia, 1926/20254
[89] Chief Magistrate John Budge to the Home Office, 21 Feb 1895, London, TNA, HO 45/9745/A56729
[90] Various police court reports from *Twentieth Century British Newspapers,* 1898-1930
[91] Kerenique White and Aldo Antonio Cellis marriage certificate, January, 1910, New Zealand, Marriage Index, 1840-1934. Her name is mis-transcribed on the marriage certificate, and Antonio Carvelli is using his alias, but it is clear that the people in question are Veronique White and Antonio Carvelli.

prostitute upon which so much feminist scholarship relies in its condemnation of third parties in the sex industry. Indeed, women were heavily represented in roles such as brothel-keeping, procuring and grooming, and also pimping and protection. After 1912, when the offence of pimping and 'controlling or directing the movements of a prostitute' was made a gender-neutral offence, a handful of women were charged each year. Meanwhile, the indictable charge of procuring, which had always been gender neutral, was brought against a significant number of women, 43% of the total charges.[92] As with the men alongside whom they worked, these women profited considerably from the sexual labour of other women, and also sometimes abused and exploited them. Most of these women also worked, like Veronique Carvelli, selling sex.

Carvelli and White's relationship could have made sense to them both on several levels, including the intimate and romantic. No clear record of their love for one another—or lack thereof—exists. The only clues lie in tracing White through passenger manifests, which show that she frequently travelled with Carvelli throughout the 1910s, 20s and 30s. When they were not together (likely because he was evading the law) she went often to visit him, until he died, I think sometime in the late 1930s.[93] A series of death notices of her family members in the *Melbourne Argus* show that she continued to go by Madame Carvelli until she herself died in 1964.[94]

Madame Carvelli therefore certainly had some kind of loyalty toward if not love for her husband after his death. In the compiled newspaper reports, it is clear that some men were charged against the wishes of the women who they associated with. Unemployed men were particularly vulnerable when they accepted money from their wives and girlfriends, and at

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[92] 'Living on Immoral Earnings' and 'Procurement', *Judicial Statistics of England and Wales*, 1898-1930

[93] I have determined this by tracing her movements and the man she travelled with (usually appearing under one of Carvelli's known aliases) in the passenger manifests on ancestry.co.uk, findmypast.co.uk, and in the shipping reports where 'Madame Carvelli' appears on voyages between Auckland and Wellington, New Zealand, and Sydney and Melbourne, Australia in digitized New Zealand newspapers.

[94] This is compiled from various obituary announcements for Veronique Carvelli's family in the Melbourne based newspaper *The Argus* between 1929 and 1965.

least three cases in the police court reports note that women became extremely distressed when their partner was sentenced.[95] If 'prostitute' was a social and legal label given to a woman who happened to sell sex, then 'pimp' was a label given a man who associated with her. Men who were labelled or prosecuted as 'pimps' and 'traffickers' may have done any or all of the activities associated with third parties--exploiting and coercing women, abusing them, protecting them, getting customers for them, acting as a go-between with police or businesses, helping them cross borders, kidnapping and entrapping them-- or none of them. They may simply have lived with a woman who sold sex, as their partner, friend, or family member.

The complexity of pimp-prostitute relationships did not escape early-twentieth century commentators. 'When for any reason a girl is "ruined", on the street, she is in a condition of great and unnatural isolation and loneliness and craves a relationship which is personal and intimate,' wrote the American sociologist William I. Thomas in 1923. 'Her attachment to the pimp is simply an underworld love affair. He is her man'. [96] Or, as doctor and philanthropist Harry Roberts explained in his introduction to the first British edition of Reitman's book, 'Not infrequently, the relation between the prostitute and her pimp is as near a relation to that of sentimental lovers as either of them is likely to find'. [97]

All the same, abusive and happy relationships can look very similar in the records that are left behind. Carvelli and White's marriage may well have been darkened by abuse and exploitation. White, more than ten years Carvelli's junior, may have felt rejected by respectable society and emotionally vulnerable. She could have believed that Carvelli—and his poor treatment of her—was the most she deserved. He may have kept her close to him through years of systematic emotional, physical and sexual abuse. She may have kept his

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[95] See for instance, *Yorkshire Evening Post* , 3 Jan. 1913; *Portsmouth Evening News* , 29 May 1901; Hyam Minz criminal file, 1935, London, TNA, CRIM 1/993.
[96] William I. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl: With Cases and Standpoint for Behaviour Analysis* (1923), 143.
[97] Harry Roberts, 'Preface' (London), xi – xvii.

name once she moved back to her family home in Melbourne after his death just to keep up appearances. In any case, Lydia Harvey, the young woman whom the Carvellis defrauded and then abused in Buenos Aires and London, felt no loyalty or love for her male or female exploiters: 'I wish I had never met them', she told the investigating officer.[98]

There is certainly ample evidence to suggest that other pimps and traffickers did frequently resort to violence, both against the women who worked for and with them, and against other men. Aside from the sensationalized accounts of violent turf wars between gangster pimps in early twentieth century London and Chicago which furnished the Sunday papers, we have the far more numerous accounts of interpersonal violence between pimps and prostitutes that are buried in small police court reports. From these reports, we can see that while many of the early twentieth-century prosecutions under Britain's 'living on the earnings of a prostitute' law were brought by the police and local authorities as a way to punish both men and women (who were charged with soliciting or brothel keeping alongside the men), around fifty percent were brought by the women themselves, and in almost all these cases violence was a factor and the violence was perpetrated against the man's wife or cohabiting partner. Women reported being beaten for not making enough money and for lying about their earnings. One woman was described as being 'disfigured for life', and in another case an ex-soldier who was found guilty of pimping threw his walking stick at his wife on the way out of court. In one particularly disturbing but not isolated case, a man stabbed his wife to death because she came home without any cash.[99] These proceedings demonstrated the frequency with which violence could be part of the pimp-prostitute relationship, but they also place the violence of pimping very much within a wider context of domestic abuse. Indeed, rather than being seen as revealing a specific kind of violence against prostitute women, the 'living on immoral earnings' legislation can be seen as offering a rare

[98] Witness Statement of Lydia Rhodda Harvey, 13th of July, 1910, London, TNA MEPO 3/197

[99] Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 23 Mar. 1914; Gloucestershire Echo, 28 May 1921;*The Times,* 20 January 1900, 3C, and many other police court reports.

window through which historians can glimpse domestic violence in the past: a phenomenon that was very common yet grievously under-documented.[100]

The relationships between pimps and prostitutes could be personal and intimate, but were also a hallmark of the systems of commercial sex that had grown up in an era of increased criminalization. In discourses on pimping, the pimp was and is frequently seen as an eternal, inevitable, and natural component of the sex industry. In the tellingly entitled *Second Oldest Profession*, Ben Reitman grandiosely states that 'through the ages, the pimp has been kept in the background, though he has always been at the prostitute's side waiting to collect her wages'.[101] But most historians, by contrast, have seen the development or increase of third-party involvement as one of the chief indicators of change in prostitution in different times and places: women turned to intermediaries as prostitution became increasingly criminalized.[102] Less sentimentally then, women who sold sex also needed third parties to help them work in an increasingly hostile climate. The network of intermediaries who worked in the sex industry helped women secure places to work, watched out for the police, paid bail when they were arrested, advertised their services, drove the taxis that took them and their clients to hotels, ran the hotels to which they went, provided the rooms in which they worked, cleaned and managed their premises and booked their appointments, and protected them from assault by clients.[103]

Women like Veronique White—that is, women who failed to conform to what society envisioned to be a victim of sexual exploitation and who appeared to sell sex and share their earnings with men willingly—were also central to the contempt in which pimps were held. Pimps, to Reitman, were the hustlers of the 'lazy shiftless huzzy', and the pimp was disgusting because he touched the prostitutes' tainted body and dealt with her sick mind: 'The

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[100] Ginger Frost, '"He Could Not Hold His Passions": Domestic Violence and Cohabitation In England (1850-1905).' *Crime, Histoire Et Sociétés* 12.1 (2008): 25-44
[101] Reitman, *The Second Oldest Profession*, xxii.
[102] Harris, *Human Merchandise: A Study in the International Traffic in Women*, 106.
[103] Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960*, 95.

pimp must love a woman, at least like her enough to tolerate her—a woman who gives her body and soul to all comers,' Reitman wrote. 'The body his woman brings to him is…always defiled'.[104] It was Carvelli's willingness to be in a long-term, sexual and emotional relationship with the prostitute Veronique White, in other words, that marked him as a deviant and disgusting person, every bit as much as his recruitment of younger, vulnerable women.

Indeed, even these younger, supposedly innocent women did not escape opprobrium. The entire narrative of 'white slavery' rested on the presumption, as Thomas put it in his account of the white slave trade, that women can 'become broken and submissive, as an animal is broken and trained'. [105] The idea of the pimp as 'breaking' women is a pervasive trope in white slavery literature from the early twentieth century, and likewise in films, novels, and television shows that depict trafficking in the early twenty first century. It also features heavily in Van Onselen's account of the pimp and trafficker Joe Silver. Lydia Harvey, Carvelli's young New Zealand victim, would likely have taken issue with such a portrayal: she returned to Wellington, found work as a hospital matron, and reported to the woman who helped her in London that she was very happy.[106] She married an Australian merchant seaman five years after her experience of abuse and exploitation at the hands of Antonio Carvelli.[107]

This attitude was, in fact, written into the law against procuration and pimping from the start, and also informed its enforcement. The 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act's provisions against 'procuring' specifically excluded women who were already 'prostitutes or of known immoral character' from being victims of procurement, unless it was done with

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[104] Reitman, *The Second Oldest Profession*, 23; 243.
[105] Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl: With Cases and Standpoint for Behaviour Analysis*, 141.
[106] Annual Report of the London Police Home for Women and Girls, 1910, London, London Metropolitan Archives, ACC/22/01/B22/5
[107] Lydia Rhoda Harvey and Herbert Ockenden Marriage Certificate, Sydney, 1915, Australia Marriage Index, 1798-1950, on ancestry.co.uk (accessed on 4 Nov. 2014)

'threats of violence or drugs…with the intent to stupefy or overpower'. In terms of enforcement, while the 1912 'white slavery' act made 'controlling or directing the movements of a prostitute' a crime, it was the women who sold sex who were most frequently targeted for deportation. Over all, the arrests of women for offences related to selling sex dwarfed the number of men (or women) who were arrested as intermediaries.[108] Even prosecution in the Carvelli trial, a case that aligned so readily with public fears about 'white slavery', had proven, in the words of the reporting officers, 'difficult, owing to the class of woman and girl we had to deal with': all of the young women had had sexual relationships with men prior to being trafficked, potentially marking them of 'known immoral character'.[109] The sexual experience of the women in the case was certainly what prompted the judge to award the 'two despicable ruffians' six months without hard labour, a sentence that grated on the investigating officers who had poured so much energy into building the case against them. Carvelli was despised for victimizing women, but such women's victimhood was likewise always in question. While misogyny was certainly at work in the practise of pimping, it was, perhaps ironically, the widespread condemnation of prostitutes that underwrote early twentieth century society's contempt for pimps.

IV

The stereotype of the pimp and trafficker has developed over the course of the modern period, and has come to play an important role in our understanding of prostitution as

[108] Arrests for solicitation-related offences and pimping-related offences, *Judicial Statistics of England and Wales*, 1898-1930

[109] For more details on the limitations of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, see Laite, *Common Prostitutes and Ordinary Citizens: Commercial Sex in London, 1885-1960*, 85–101.

criminal, rather than a systemic or social, problem.[110] In the early twentieth century, intermediaries in prostitution, once seen merely as panders to the appetites of sex-buyers and as the agents who arranged for the transport of cheap labour, were encoded with new meanings that helped to change cultural ideas about prostitution as well as the legal response to it. If the male client was the demonized figure in the late nineteenth century radical campaigns against regulated prostitution, the pimp and trafficker was to be the twentieth century's prostitution bogeyman, its global minotaur. In this vision of a commercial sex market created not by demand but by the exploitation of unscrupulous and often racially othered middlemen, prostitution could be increasingly defined as a criminal activity: part of an organized, underworld economy; instigated by criminal men; and divorced from the state, the police, ordinary male sexual practices, or the licit labour market. The laws and policies surrounding pimps and traffickers further enabled the deeper Victorian critique of prostitution as 'the great social evil' to fade away, in favour, as Paul Knepper argues, of a vision of prostitution as a form of underworld crime.[111] The pimp and trafficker have been used in political and cultural discourse ever since to efface or ignore the systemic inequalities that enable exploited prostitution (as a form of exploited labour) to function.[112] This has proven to be one of the most enduring legacies of the era of 'white slavery'.

However much responsibility Antonio Carvelli bears and should bear for his exploitation and abuse of the young women whom he brought to Buenos Aires and London in the early twentieth century, he and other men like him were not wholly responsible for the market in bought sex. They did not emerge *ex nihilo*, nor were they simply a product of their

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[110] Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, 256.
[111] Paul Knepper, *The Invention of International Crime: A Global Issue in the Making, 1881-1914* (Basingstoke, 2010), 117–125.
[112] Jo Doezema, 'Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-Emergence of the Myth of "White Slavery" in Contemporary Discourses of "Trafficking in Women"', *Gender Issues*, 18/1 (2000), 23–50; Maggie Lee, *Human Trafficking* (Devon, 2007); Kamala Kempadoo, 'From Moral Panic to Global Justice: Changing Perspectives on Trafficking', in *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*, ed. by Kamala Kemapdoo (Boulder, Co, 2005), vii – xxxiv.

individual mental pathologies. Their path toward pimping and trafficking could often include experience in the military, which encouraged and normalized prostitution, and which exploited and emotionally and physically harmed young men. Pimping was caught up within the often racist migration restrictions that prevented men and women from seeking better lives in other countries legally; and the service and entertainment industries which profited from the low pay, dodgy contracts, and itinerant labour of both women and men. Men who worked as third parties in the sex industry usually had much in common with the women upon whose earnings they lived.

It is important to explain men like Antonio Carvelli and Alexander de Nicotera simply because it enriches our understanding of them as historical actors in their own right. There is no justification for only rescuing heroes from the past, however much more pleasant or uncontroversial that endeavour may be. Moreover, some intermediaries in prostitution were not abusive or cruel, but were rather the partners, lovers, and friends of women who sold sex, who in turn depended upon them for support, caring, and security. These complex relationships ran the gamut even within the life of one man: from the young girl who despised him for abusing her, to the old woman who died still going by the name 'Madame Carvelli'.

But this attempt to explain Antonio Carvelli has aimed to go beyond rescuing heroes and demons and those in between. When we see pimps and traffickers as caught up within the same global forces of labour and exploitation affected the women who turned to commercial sex, and the 'underworld' to which they supposedly belonged as deeply connected to licit or tolerated structures of misogyny, exploitation, work, and migration, then we can begin to redeploy much deeper and more complex critiques of prostitution. The global commercial sex market was not called into being by bogeymen, by 'fiends in the shape of a man', but by ordinary men and women who played a range of roles in a much wider system marked by mobility and labour exploitation, and by economic, racial, and sexual inequality, within the

local and domestic sphere as well in the world market. Antonio Carvelli does not make for the most heroic of subjects, but his life, such as we are able to know it, does demonstrate the individual and global importance of these connections.